

about 10 percent of total Medicare costs.

Many elderly smokers began their habit decades ago, when tobacco companies told us that smoking carried no health risks. But we know better now, and help is available. Since 2005, Medicare has covered the cost of smoking cessation counseling for beneficiaries with diseases caused by tobacco use, such as cardiovascular disease, lung disease, weak bones, blood clots, and cataracts. Medicare also covers counseling for beneficiaries who take medications for diabetes, hypertension, blood clots, and depression because tobacco use can reduce the effectiveness of these medicines. Medicare Part D plans also cover smoking-cessation products such as nicotine patches and gum as long as they are prescribed by a physician.

There has been significant progress in the fight against cancer, and one factor is the decline in overall smoking rates in the U.S. But a recent New York Times article entitled, "The Smoking Scourge Among Urban Blacks," reported dramatic increases in smoking among poor minorities in cities across America and particularly in my home town of Baltimore. On city streets, cigarettes are sold individually as "loosies" for 50 cents each, targeting people who cannot afford the nearly \$5 cost of a full pack. Despite the success of antismoking campaigns among American society as a whole, recent research shows that more than half of poor, Black young adults still smoke. So we must continue to do more to educate minority children and young adults about the health hazards of smoking. We won't be able to attack the problem of health disparities in earnest until we do.

Finally, it is time for the United States to recognize nicotine as a drug and regulate its use. That is why I am a cosponsor of Senator KENNEDY's bill, S. 625, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. This bipartisan legislation, sponsored by a majority of this body, would give the Food and Drug Administration broad new authority to regulate the manufacture, distribution, advertising, promotion, sale, and use of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products. Congress cannot in good conscience allow the Federal agency most responsible for protecting the public health to remain powerless to deal with the enormous risks of tobacco.

In closing, I want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the American Cancer Society in raising awareness of the dangers of tobacco use and in sponsoring the Great American Smokeout. Over the years, ACS has helped millions of Americans live healthier, longer, and fuller lives. With comprehensive tobacco control programs, indoor smoke-free workplace laws, and a multitude of smoking cessation resources available today to help smokers, there has never been a better time to quit. Today's smokeout will give

many more Americans the motivation to put out their last cigarette.

THE FIRES OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA 2007

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, in October, residents of San Bernardino, San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura, Riverside, and Santa Barbara counties faced some of the most horrific fires in California's history. At one point, flames driven by fierce Santa Ana winds forced as many as one million Californians to flee their homes and communities.

During these firestorms, 14 people lost their lives. More than 100 people sustained injuries. Almost 3,000 structures, two-thirds of them homes, were destroyed. More than 500,000 acres burned. The impact of these tragic fires will be felt by the people of California for a long time, but we will do everything we can to help rebuild the damaged lives, homes, and communities.

It is often during the very worst of times that we see the very best of humanity. I want to express my deep appreciation to all those at the local, county, State, and Federal levels who worked tirelessly to get the job done, including CalFire, the California National Guard, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Navy, the Marines, the Border Patrol, the National Park Service and, above all, the county and local fire agencies.

I was deeply touched by the thousands of courageous and tireless firefighters who worked around the clock saving the lives of people caught in the fire's path, battling flames, and protecting neighborhoods. Our California firefighters and those who traveled across the country to help risked their own lives to protect the lives and homes of others. We are so grateful to these heroes, and will never forget their bravery and dedication.

Thankfully, no firefighters or public safety officers lost their lives during the fires. But several of our firefighters were injured, some of them seriously, and I send them and their families my best wishes for a full recovery.

As we pay tribute to our firefighters, we must recognize their valor with not just words, but also deeds. That means standing up for their health and welfare, particularly as they face challenges that can last a lifetime. Our firefighters are there for all of us when we need them most and they deserve the same.

RETIREMENT OF DENIS P. O'DONOVAN

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, this is another one of those bittersweet moments for us all as we say goodbye to a member of our extended family, Denis O'Donovan. Denis will soon be retiring and bringing to a close a truly remarkable career in the Senate.

Denis has worked in several offices in the Senate during his career, but I

would like to think he saved his best for his last post—as the chief clerk of our committee, a post he has held since 1998.

I remember when I first came to the committee and had the opportunity to observe Denis at work. I don't think I have ever met anyone who had a better eye for detail, or a better sense of making sure everything was in its proper place. He has a great mind for numbers, and anyone who has ever had to work with a budget knows how frustrating it can be to make sure all the columns add up and are balanced—top to bottom—and—left to right.

As the Senate's only accountant, I admire that kind of precision. In fact, I think our love of numbers may be one of the reasons why we got along so well and enjoyed each other so much.

In the years that I have served on the committee, I have had the chance to work with Denis as its chairman and now, as the ranking member. No matter which party had control of the committee, Denis was always there, ready to help in any way he could. That is why he was such a good chief clerk for me, for Senator KENNEDY, and for all of us.

Looking back, Denis has a lot to be proud of. He has been a part of a lot of the good work the committee has done over the years. Senator KENNEDY and I have brought a long list of measures to the Senate floor and then on to the President for his signature and Denis played an important role in every one of them. Thanks in no small part to you, Denis, we have made great progress on a lot of issues that will make life better for all Americans.

Now Denis is about to head off to that thoughtful and reflective world known as retirement. He will finally have the time to finish that book—not the one he was writing—the one he was reading. For now, there will be time to do all those things Denis has been putting off for someday.

I have a family tradition we call the list of 100 things. Simply put, it is the to do list of all time. You put together a list of the 100 things you have always wanted to do someday—and then you start to get them done—one by one. It is a little more complicated than that, but I will get together with you to explain the whole procedure to you later. It will be one of our gifts to you on your retirement.

I know what you are thinking—just what I wanted—more stuff to do!

Trust me, you will enjoy this project. And the next time I see you, we will compare notes so I can see how you are doing in your quest for adventure in your retirement.

I hope Senator KENNEDY will not mind, but I would like to close with a bit of Irish cheer for you—the words of a toast I have often heard, and I am sure you have too.

Denis, as you leave us:

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.